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**Friday - April 12, 2002**

### **JURY FINDS SIX GUILTY ON DRUG CHARGES**

Tampa - A jury in Tampa federal court, late Thursday afternoon, returned a guilty verdict on six defendants who were charged with conspiracy to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and armed trafficking. All six are from New Jersey and were arrested back in November of 2001 during a joint investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Sarasota Police Department. On November 12, 2001 the defendants met with an undercover detective and negotiated to pay \$460,000 in cash for 20 kilograms of cocaine. All suspects were arrested without incident and more than \$500,000 was seized, along with six firearms and an additional kilogram of cocaine.

Both Mark Foster (DOB 3/30/68) and Joseph McBride (DOB 10/25/62) face mandatory terms of life imprisonment due to multiple prior drug convictions. In addition they face a mandatory consecutive term of five years' imprisonment for the firearms charge. Donald Welch (DOB 4/17/73) faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment due to a prior drug conviction and an additional mandatory consecutive term of five years' imprisonment for the firearms charge. Eric Flowers (DOB 2/13/75), Ruben Ames (DOB 8/25/63), and Seque Mitchell (DOB 9/8/70) each face a mandatory minimum term of 10 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment and each face an additional mandatory consecutive term of five years' imprisonment for the firearms charge.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jim Preston of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) in the Middle District of Florida.